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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 40 OF THE COVENANT

Second periodic reports of States parties due in 1988

Addendum

LEBANON 1/2/

[6 June 1996]

1/ For the initial report submitted by the Government of Lebanon, see CCPR/C/1/Add.60; for the consideration of this report by the Committee, see CCPR/C/SR.442 to SR.444 and SR.446 and General Assembly, Official Records, Thirty-eighth session, Supplement No. 40 (A/38/40), paras. 336-373.

2/ The information communicated by Lebanon in accordance with the guidelines concerning the first part of the reports of States parties is contained in the core document HRI/CORE/1/Add.27/Rev.1.

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INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE ARTICLES OF THE COVENANT

Article 1

1. Paragraph (a) of the preamble to the Lebanese Constitution, adopted under the constitutional amendment of 21 September 1990 (pursuant to the Taif Agreement of 22 October 1989, which ended the civil war), states: "Lebanon is a free, independent, sovereign State, a homeland for all its children, united in its territory, its people and its institutions, within borders defined by this Constitution and internationally recognized". Paragraph (d) of the preamble reads: "The people is the source of authority. It is sovereign and shall exercise its sovereignty through constitutional institutions". Article 1 of the Constitution provides that "Lebanon is an independent, unitary and sovereign State ...".

2. In accordance with these provisions and the people's right to self-determination, the Lebanese authorities are in the process of preparing the legislative elections to be held in autumn 1996 (the last legislative elections date back to August-September 1992). The Government, in consultation with all the political bodies concerned, in particular the parliamentary factions and the political parties, is looking for the best way (number and limits of constituencies, voting procedure) of submitting an electoral bill to Parliament which will serve as the basis for the planned elections and be likely to satisfy all parties and guarantee the largest turnout.

3. The people's freedom to dispose of its natural wealth and resources is not subject to any restriction by the Lebanese authorities. However, the right of the Lebanese people to self-determination and to dispose of its natural wealth and resources has been threatened by Israel, which occupies part of Lebanese territory despite Security Council resolution 425 (1978), subjects the population to all kinds of abuse and ill-treatment and periodically carries out intensive bombing in the rest of the country, driving the inhabitants out of their towns and villages and causing hundreds of victims and the destruction of the economic infrastructure.

4. Israel also has its eye on Lebanon's water resources, especially the waters of the Litani river, which lies entirely within Lebanese borders.

5. Lebanon nevertheless wants peace, provided that it is not contrary to the right of its people to self-determination and to dispose of its own resources and that it is just, lasting and applicable throughout the region, in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

Article 2

6. Paragraph (c) of the preamble added to the Lebanese Constitution on 21 September 1991 provides that "Lebanon is a democratic parliamentary Republic, based on respect for public freedoms, foremost among which is freedom of opinion and belief, and on social justice and equality of rights and obligations among all citizens without distinction or preference".

Chapter 2 of the Constitution, entitled "The Lebanese, their rights and their obligations", provides in article 7 that: "All Lebanese are equal before the law. They shall enjoy equal civil and political rights and be equally bound by public responsibilities and duties, without any distinction".

7. It is true that, as in many Constitutions, the affirmation of equality of rights and obligations applies to citizens and not to men and women in general. However, no provision of Lebanese law makes a distinction between races or between individuals on the grounds of colour, language, political opinions, social origin, birth or fortune. The preamble to the Constitution reaffirms Lebanon's attachment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Lebanon also acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on 12 November 1971.

8. There are many Palestinians in Lebanon, as well as Syrian, Egyptian, Sri Lankan, Filipino, Indian and other workers. There is no restriction on freedom of conscience, freedom of association, the individual use of national languages, freedom of worship or the celebration of religious or secular holidays. There is no obstacle to access to the courts.

9. Some specific or practical problems relating to equality between men and women, equality in respect of the right to leave the country and equality in respect of the right to marry will be considered under the relevant articles (arts. 3, 8, 12 and 18). Progress in adopting legislation to give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant will also be considered under the relevant articles, particularly articles 3 and 24.

10. A person whose rights have been infringed by a wrongful act by a public official may claim compensation from the Government, if necessary, by referring the matter to the Council of State if the act in question is considered to be service-related (art. 61 of the Act implemented by Decree No. 10434 of 4 June 1975 on the Organization of the Council of State). He may institute proceedings against the official in the ordinary courts, subject to a government authorization if the act in question is considered to be a personal fault (a serious fault or a fault not committed in the exercise of official functions). Administrative acts (decrees, orders) may be repealed by the Council of State if a remedy is filed within the statutory time-limit (two months) by a person entitled to take action (arts. 62 and 69 of the above-mentioned Act).

11. It should be pointed out that the so-called southern Lebanese Army, a Lebanese militia in the pay of Israel, maintains an arbitrary judicial system in the border area of southern Lebanon that is beyond the control of the Lebanese authorities. The situation in this militia's detention centre is considered under articles 7 and 9.

Article 3

12. Women have access to schools and universities on an equal footing with men. They also have access to public office and to positions in the judiciary. The increase in the number of women in the liberal professions between 1980 and 1994 is indicated below:

	1980	1994
Doctors	6.90%	14.35%
Pharmacists	36.00%	51.00%
Lawyers	5.80%	24.30%
Engineers	0.20%	6.78%

Women's participation in the economic sector increased from 19.04 per cent to 27.08 per cent between 1970 and 1995.

13. Since the submission of the initial report, equality between men and women has improved in several respects. Improvements in the legal status of women are the result of action by specialized associations, the Ministry of Justice and the competent Parliamentary Commissions (Commission on Administration and Justice, Commission on Rules of Procedure and Human Rights).

14. According to the legislation governing the organization of the land register, which dates back to 1922 and 1926, the two parties to a property transaction must, when they appear before the land register officer, be accompanied by two witnesses "of the male sex" to testify to their identity before the contract is concluded. The words "of the male sex" were deleted by Act. No. 275 of 4 November 1993. Women now have the same capacity as men to act as witnesses.

15. Under articles 11, 12 and 13 of the Lebanese Code of Commerce, a married woman could not engage in commerce without a written authorization from her husband. This condition was done away with by Act No. 380 of 4 November 1994. A woman who has attained her majority, whether married or single, now has full capacity to engage in commerce.

16. According to article 39, paragraph 2, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Organization Act, Lebanese women diplomats who married foreigners had to be transferred to the central government. This paragraph was deleted under Act No. 376 of 10 November 1994.

17. On 8 April 1995, the Director-General of Police told the Parliamentary Commission on Rules of Procedure and Human Rights that, contrary to what some people believe, "a married woman can obtain a passport without her husband's permission". The elimination of this requirement dates back to 1974.

18. On 13 March 1996, the Parliamentary Commission on Administration and Justice adopted a bill authorizing the Government to accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

19. Progress still needs to be made in ensuring equality between men and women.

20. Article 995, paragraph 1, of chapter III of the Lebanese Code of Obligations and Contracts, entitled "Life insurance", provides that "Life insurance contracted by a third party on the life of the insured person shall be null and void if the latter has not given his consent in writing, indicating the amount insured". However, paragraphs 1 and 2 of article 997 provide that: "Life insurance may not be contracted by a third party on the life of a married woman without her husband's authorization or on the life of a person with a legal counsel without the latter's authorization. Such authorization does not waive the requirement of the consent of the incompetent person". This article of the Code of Obligations and Contracts, which equates a married woman with an incompetent person and her husband with a legal counsel, has been criticized by certain associations, which have called for its repeal with reference to married women. The Ministry of Justice is in the process of preparing a bill for this purpose, with a view to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

21. The same associations are calling for the repeal or amendment of articles 487, 488 and 489 of the Lebanese Penal Code, under which an adulterous woman is liable to between three months and two years' imprisonment and her partner to only one month to one year of imprisonment if he is unmarried, and for the repeal of article 562 of the Code, which grants grounds for absolution or mitigation in cases involving what are known as "crimes of honour" committed by men (husband, son, father or brother).

22. There have also been proposals for the amendment of articles 1 and 4 of Order No. 15 of 19 January 1925 on Lebanese nationality, which is granted only to the children of Lebanese fathers, since Lebanese women cannot transmit their nationality to the children if the father is a foreigner (except in two special situations: if the father dies while the child is still a minor or the child is a natural child recognized by his Lebanese mother before being recognized by his foreign father). The possibility of the revision of articles 1 and 4 of Order No. 15 should be given special consideration when the nationality laws are amended.

Article 4

23. On account of recent threats against State security and the danger of a return to the conditions which prevailed during the 1975-1990 war, Decree No. 7988 of 27 February 1996 entrusted the army with maintaining security for three months. The Government also prohibited demonstrations and even imposed a curfew during the morning of 29 February. These measures were taken under Decree-Law No. 102 of 16 September 1983 (National Defence Act), which provides that, if the State of Lebanon is threatened in one or more of its regions by acts which may be harmful to its security or its interests, the army is entrusted with maintaining order. In this case, the commander-in-chief of the army is entitled to take all measures to ensure security and, in particular, to search buildings and other premises, after having obtained the authorization of the competent judicial authorities, to check ports and vessels in Lebanese territorial waters, to monitor the arrival and departure

of foreigners, to prohibit unauthorized or military rallies, to prosecute trouble-makers who must be brought before the competent courts within a period of five days as from the day of their arrest and to combat smuggling. Persons who commit acts which endanger security and persons arrested as a result of the implementation of the above-mentioned measures are all to be referred to the military courts.

Article 6

24. Since the initial report, capital punishment for intentional homicide under article 549 of the Penal Code has been extended by Decree-Law No. 112 of 16 September 1983 to three additional cases:

(a) Where the homicide was committed on an individual on account of his religious affiliation or out of vengeance for a crime committed by a third party belonging to the same religion as that person or related to him or belonging to the same political party;

(b) Where the homicide was committed by means of explosives;

(c) Where the homicide was committed to avoid the consequences of a crime or an offence or in order to remove any traces of that crime or offence.

25. with regard to the protection of the right to life by measures to prevent war, the Lebanese Government has been holding peace negotiations with Israel but they, have been suspended for reasons beyond Lebanon's control. In the meantime, Israel continues periodically to bomb the civilian population, destroying dwellings and infrastructure and causing hundreds of victims among children, women and old people.

26. At the domestic level, the Government of Lebanon is taking the necessary measures to prevent the resumption of the armed conflicts which ravaged Lebanon for 16 years.

27. The Government is also making great efforts to improve the health conditions of citizens and of children in particular. Free vaccination campaigns are organized on a regular basis and a centre has been set up for children's chronic diseases.

Article 7

28. A person who is responsible for striking and wounding which has not caused injury or has caused less than 10 days' incapacity is liable to a penalty under article 554 of the Lebanese Penal Code of up to six months' imprisonment or a fine of 10,000 to 50,000 Lebanese pounds or both. Under article 555 of the Penal Code, the penalty may be increased to up to one year's imprisonment or a fine of 100,000 pounds or both if the incapacity lasts more than 10 days. If it lasts more than 20 days, the penalty is from three months to three year's imprisonment in addition to the above-mentioned fine (art. 556). In the event of mutilation, the penalty may be as much as 10 years' imprisonment with forced labour (art. 557).

29. The Parliamentary Commission on Rules of Procedure and Human Rights has had to consider complaints submitted by deputies or by Lebanon's two bar associations (Beirut and Tripoli) about the ill treatment of persons in some police stations and by some security services. Measures have been taken in cooperation with the Minister of Justice.

30. The situation is far more serious in Khiam prison in the border strip known as the "security zone" occupied by Israel in southern Lebanon, which delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross were able to visit for the first time only in October 1995; about 250 persons, mainly Lebanese, have been held there without trial, some for more than 10 years. On several occasions non-governmental organizations have complained about conditions of detention in this prison and reported torture during the interrogations conducted by Israeli officers. Other Lebanese (numbering 75) are imprisoned under similar conditions in Israeli territory. Some have served their sentences, but have not been released.

Article 8

31. The initial report described the legal conditions for paid work in Lebanon. There are no cases of slavery to report. For fuller information, it should be noted that the maximum number of hours of work for household employees is not respected, although they are generally well treated.

32. Under article 44 of the Penal Code, crimes are subject either to capital punishment or to imprisonment, which may or may not involve forced labour. Although forced labour is provided for in the Penal Code and in judgements handed down by criminal courts, it is not applied in practice for lack of proper organization.

33. Young Lebanese have to do one year of military service; exemptions are granted in the case of an eldest son, an only son, etc. Conscientious objector status is not recognized.

Article 9

34. The initial report described the constitutional basis in Lebanese law for the rights and freedoms embodied in this article of the Covenant. Article 8 of the Constitution thus reads: "Individual freedom is guaranteed and protected. No one may be arrested or detained except as provided for by law. No breach or penalty may be established other than by law".

35. Article 569 of the Penal Code deals with the act of depriving a person of his liberty by abduction or any other means. Following the submission of the initial report, this article was amended by Decree-Law No. 112 of 16 September 1983 to cover subsequent cases of abduction in connection with the armed conflicts in the country. The new wording provides for a life sentence of forced labour in the following cases:

(a) Where deprivation of liberty exceeds one month;

(b) Where the person deprived of his liberty has been subjected to physical or psychological ill-treatment;

(c) Where the offence was committed on the person of an official in, during or because of the exercise of his functions;

(d) Where the motive for the offence is religious or involves a political cause or where it constitutes vengeance on the person of the victim for an act committed by other persons of his religion, party or family;

(e) Where the offender used his victim as a hostage to intimidate individuals, institutions or the State in order to extort money from them or oblige them to carry our his wishes or to perform or not to perform an act;

(f) Where the offence was committed following an attack on a private or public means or transport such as a car, a train, a ship or an aircraft;

(g) Where the offence was committed by a group of two or more persons who were armed when they committed it.

36. The sentence is increased (capital punishment rather than life imprisonment, length of sentence increased by one third or one half) where the offence caused the death of a person as a result of fear or any other related cause.

37. The amended article 570 provides for six months to three years' imprisonment if the person deprived of his liberty was released spontaneously within three days and no crime or offence was committed against him. The penalty is halved if the victim was released spontaneously within 24 hours in the same circumstances.

38. As to the guarantees enjoyed by individuals vis-à-vis criminal justice and the Department of the Government Prosecutor, the following provisions apply.

39. Under article 102 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the examining magistrate must question the defendant immediately if he has been served with a summons. He must question him within 24 hours if he has been served with a warrant.

40. After 24 hours, the prison director must, on his own initiative, refer the defendant to the Procurator-General who must ask the examining magistrate to hear him. If the examining magistrate refuses, if he is absent or if a legitimate reason prevents him from doing so, the Procurator-General will request the President of the court to question him or require one of his judges to do so. If it is not possible to question the defendant, the Procurator-General must order his immediate release.

41. Article 103 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides that, if a defendant arrested under an arrest warrant is not questioned within 24 hours or is not brought before the Procurator-General, his arrest is considered an arbitrary act and the official responsible will be prosecuted for deprivation of personal freedom under article 368 of the Penal Code (this article will be referred to below).

42. Article 113 of the Penal Code states that a person arrested under a warrant must be referred without delay to the Department of the Government Prosecutor in the court of the examining magistrate who issued the warrant. The official who executed the warrant is then given a receipt for the discharge of the defendant, who is taken to the local prison, and the examining magistrate is so informed.

43. Article 420 of the Penal Code provides that the examining magistrate and the justice of the peace must visit persons under arrest or in prison at least once a month and that the Presidents of criminal courts must visit them at least once every three months.

44. Article 427 provides that anyone who knows that a person is being held in premises other than those intended by the Government for imprisonment or arrest must so inform the Procurator-General or his deputy or the examining magistrate or the justice of the peace.

45. Article 428 provides that the officials referred to in the preceding article must, on being given this information, go immediately to the prison and release any person being held in illegal custody. If it appears to them that there is a legitimate reason for the detention, they must send the detainee immediately to the Procurator-General or the justice of the peace concerned and prepare a report. If they fail to comply with the foregoing, they will be deemed to be accomplices in the offence of deprivation of personal freedom and will be prosecuted as such.

46. These provisions are reinforced by the articles of the Penal Code which are applicable to officials in breach of the law:

(a) Article 367 provides that any official who arrests or imprisons any person in cases other than those provided for by law will be punished by a sentence of forced labour for life;

(b) Article 368 provides that the governors and warders of penal or disciplinary establishments or reformatories and all other persons performing such functions who have held an individual without a warrant or court decision or have detained him beyond the statutory time limit will be punished by a prison sentence of three years;

(c) Article 369 provides that the persons mentioned above and, in general, all law enforcement officers and administrative officals who refuse or delay the bringing before a competent judge of an arrested or detained person will be punished by a prison sentence of between one month and one year.

47. During the 16 years of war, tens of thousands of persons disappeared after they were abducted by the Israeli army or by the militias because they were members of a hostile militia or simply because of their political beliefs or religious ties. The fate of many of these persons is still unknown.

48. As indicated in connection with article 7, the southern Lebanese Army - a militia composed, as said earlier, of Lebanese in Israeli pay - is holding some 250 persons illegally in Khiam prison. Delegates of the International

Committee of the Red Cross cannot visit them despite the provisions of the Geneva Convention. A further 75 Lebanese are being held in prisons in Israeli territory to which ICRC delegates also have no access.

Article 10

49. The Parliamentary Commission on Rules of Procedure and Human Rights has more than once had to investigate conditions in prisons and reformatories for minors. It has recommended the construction of new prisons in all parts of Lebanon.

50. The Commission's attention was drawn by a deputy to prison conditions in Zahle, Lebanon's second largest city, where the cells are too small for the number of prisoners and conditions of hygiene leave much to be desired. As in many countries, prison capacity in Lebanon has not kept pace with the increase in the prison population. The difference between the capacity of each prison and the actual number of prisoners is shown below.

Name of prison	Absorption capacity	Actual number of prisoners
Roumié	900	2 328
Baabda women's prison	30	82
Beirut	175	259
Tripoli	500	669
Halba	50	46
Batroun	50	95
Zahle	50	190
Zahle (women)	8	35
Tyr	50	108
Nabatieh	10	68
Tebnine	25	36
Jbail	24	41
Aley	50	70
Roumié (juveniles)		142
Zghorta	30	60
Jeb Jannine	60	78
Rachaiya	40	36
Aïn Héloué		
Amioun		44

51. Because of the lack of space, it has not always been possible to separate juvenile offenders from adults. Women may also be held in police stations guarded by men. The Minister of the Interior therefore recently submitted a bill to the Council of Ministers for the rehabilitation of the prison system and an appropriation of 80 billion Lebanese pounds (approximately US$ 50 million) for the purpose.

52. There is no need to refer to the constant violations by Israel, particularly in Khiam prison in the border area, of the rights embodied in articles 7 and 10 of the Covenant and in many articles of the fourth Geneva Convention.

Article 11

53. Lebanese law does not allow a person to be imprisoned merely because his poverty or lack of financial means prevents him from fulfilling a contractual obligation. However, the Code of Civil Procedure (Decree-Law No. 90 of 16 September 1983), contains a chapter (chap. 7) entitled "Imprisonment for debt", article 997 of which states that:

> "A creditor may request the imprisonment of a debtor who refuses to reimburse one of the following debts, subject to the enforcement of other laws:
>
> 1. The compensation granted by a judgement for a criminal or a civil offence and the costs of the trial relating to such compensation;
>
> 2. The compensation granted by a judgement on behalf of a judge or the State in the event of the rejection of a remedy filed against them for responsibility for acts committed by judges (judicial misconduct proceedings);
>
> 3. Alimony granted by a judgement, each payment being a separate debt;
>
> 4. The dowry of or the amount granted by a judgement to a woman who has been repudiated or divorced under Muslim law."

54. As may be seen, there is a justification for such cases, which are not instances of a failure to fulfil a contractual obligation, as provided for in article 11 of the Covenant.

Article 12

55. The initial report described the practical arrangements for freedom of movement under Lebanese law, as authorized by article 12, paragraph 3, of the Covenant.

56. In order to rectify the enforced geographical distribution of the Lebanese population according to religious affiliation, paragraph (i) of the preamble added to the Lebanese Constitution on 21 September 1990 provides:

> "The national territory belongs to all Lebanese. Every citizen has the right to reside in any part of the territory and to benefit thereby in accordance with the sovereignty of the law. The geographical distribution of the population on the basis of any affiliation is prohibited, as are the splitting or partition of the territory and the settlement of Palestinians."

57. In accordance with this principle and in order to allow the return of displaced persons to the original places of residence from which they were driven out by the armed conflicts, and particularly by the bloody events of early September 1983 following the brutal withdrawal of Israeli troops from some of Lebanon's territories, a far-reaching programme was implemented and is currently in its final phase. It involves the organization of reconciliation

meetings in villages where population displacement occurred, followed by the allocation of subsidies for the reconstruction or restoration of dwellings.

58. With regard to the right to leave the country, however, a problem with which the Government must deal is the free return to their own countries of certain foreign employees. Some Lebanese employers "confiscate" their foreign employee's passport; having paid for the cost of the employee's travel from his country to Lebanon, for example, the employer wants to ensure that his employee will fulfil his contract for the minimum time he (the employer) needs to recover his expenses. In most cases, the employee concerned goes to his country's consul in Lebanon to obtain a new passport according to the procedure applicable for a lost passport.

59. The Israeli army imposes extremely stringent constraints on freedom of movement, particularly of cars, in the border area which it occupies.

Article 13

60. Since the initial report, there have been no changes in the legislation and no particular problems with regard to the expulsion of foreigners from Lebanese territory.

Article 14

61. The initial report described in detail the judicial guarantees embodied in Lebanese law, particularly in article 20 of the Constitution, which guarantees the independence of the judiciary, and in the Penal Code and the Codes of Criminal and Civil Procedure. Since then, a new Code of Civil Procedure was adopted by Decree-Law No. 90 of 16 September 1983 and it contains considerable improvements compared to the last Code.

62. It may be recalled that the Constitutional Council was set up by the Constitutional Act amending article 19 of the Constitution and by Act No. 250 of 14 July 1993. The Council is already in operation and has handed down several decisions.

Articles 15, 16 and 17

63. The initial report described Lebanese legislation on the implementation of the principle of the non-retroactivity of criminal law, the recognition of every individual as a person before the law and the protection of privacy. No amendments have been made and no particular problems have arisen in these areas.

64. With regard to article 17, the inviolability of the home is embodied in article 14 of the Constitution, which states: "Dwellings shall be inviolable. No one may enter therein except in the circumstances and in the manner prescribed by law."

Article 18

65. As the initial report stated, article 9 of the Lebanese Constitution reads: "There shall be complete freedom of conscience. While acknowledging

the Most High, the State shall respect all creeds and safeguard and protect the free exercise of all forms of worship, on condition that public order is not interfered with. It also guarantees that the personal status and religious interests of the population, to whatever creed they belong, shall be respected."

66. No Lebanese law imposes limits or conditions on the freedom of religion or freedom of worship, either for Lebanese or for foreigners living in Lebanon.

67. However, the Lebanese must belong to one of the religious demoninations Lebanon officially recognizes. Since civil marriage does not exist, a Lebanese couple that wishes to marry has to follow the procedure and the ceremony of one of the recognized religious communities. However, a valid civil marriage celebrated abroad is recognized in Lebanon even if both spouses are Lebanese.

68. Cemeteries belong exclusively to recognized religious communities.

Article 19

69. Freedom of expression, as stated in the initial report, is guaranteed by article 13 of the Constitution, which provides that: "Freedom of speech and of writing, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of association shall be guaranteed within the limits laid down by law."

70. Paragraph (c) of the new preamble to the Constitution states that the Lebanese Republic is based on respect for public freedoms, foremost among which is freedom of opinion and belief.

71. Since the number of television and radio channels increased without the slightest control during the 16 years of armed conflict in Lebanon, the Government has undertaken to reorganize these two media sectors. It intends to grant a reasonable number of operating licences in order to strike a balance between technical constraints and the requirements of pluralism.

Article 20

72. There are no new legislative provisions and no particular problems to report. However, a deep-rooted change in attitudes should be noted: all Lebanese agree that hatred, hostility and violence among them must be rooted out.

73. In external relations, the Government has become involved in the peace process with Israel.

Article 21

74. With regard to what was stated in connection with article 4, the Government has temporarily prohibited demonstrations and gatherings in order to prevent any return to the anarchy and armed conflicts which caused hundreds of thousands of victims, weakened the State and jeopardized national unity and with a view to the legislative elections in October.

Article 22

75. In accordance with Lebanese law, associations may be established freely and made public simply by means of a statement deposited with the Ministry of the Interior or any other ministry concerned (National Education, etc.) and indicating the goals of the association, the names and addresses of its founders and a copy of its statutes. A receipt is issued for the statement and is published in the Official Gazette. The establishment of an association and its acquisition of legal personality are therefore not subject to prior authorization. At present, however, and in view of the current situation, as referred to in this report in connection with articles 4 and 21, such receipts are not always issued automatically.

76. Article 15 of the Public Officials' Statute (Decree-Law No. 112 of 12 June 1959), prohibits public officials from forming trade unions, striking or making collective demands.

Article 23

77. Since the initial report and apart from improvements in the legal status of women, as referred to in this report in connection with article 3, there have been no amendments to legislation and no particular problems with regard to the family and marriage.

Article 24

78. Since the initial report, considerable improvements have been made with regard to the protection of children, including:

(a) The adoption in 1983 of the Disabled Persons' Act, intended to protect disabled persons, whose numbers increased considerably during the 16 years of armed conflict, a large percentage of whom are children;

(b) The introduction of a compulsory medical examination before marriage for both men and women so as to reduce the risks of children being born with congenital defects;

(c) The recent submission of a bill making 15 years the minimum age for child labour;

(d) The establishment of the Parliamentary Commission on the Rights of the Child, in addition to the already existing Parliamentary Commission on Rules of Procedure and Human Rights;

(e) The establishment of the Higher Council for Children, made up of representatives of the Government and of private associations;

(f) Lebanon's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 14 May 1991.

Article 25

79. Like article 95 of the Constitution, the National Covenant (an unwritten constitutional agreement concluded in 1943) provides for the distribution of political posts in Government (members of Parliament, ministers, Prime Minister, President of the Chamber of Deputies and President of the Republic) among the various religious communities. This distribution has been scrupulously respected and has been maintained as a transitional measure in the Taif Agreement (see the updated core document), which nevertheless provides for its gradual repeal. This was reflected in the new wording of article 95 of the Constitution (Constitutional Act of 21 September 1990).

80. The equitable distribution of all civil service posts among the communities was ensured by article 95 of the Public Officials' Statute (the above-mentioned Decree-Law No. 112). Under the new article 95 of the Constitution, it is now limited to first-category and related functions. According to this article, "These posts shall be shared equally between Christians and Muslims and no function shall be reserved for a particular community, in accordance with the principles of specialization and competence."

Articles 26 and 27

81. There is nothing to report in connection with these articles, apart from what was stated in the initial report and in connection with other articles in this report.